NEW PUBLICATIONS.

AN ECCENTRIC SCHOLAR.

THE LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF EDWARD HENRY PALMER. By Walter Besant, M. A. 12mo, pp. 42d. E. P. Duiton & Co.

Mr. Besant's biography of one of the most re-nowned of modern Orientalists bears the marks of haste, but is not the less a spirited and attractive sketch. It would have been difficult, indeed, even for a writer less accomplished and a friend less de voted to make uninteresting thedrawing of Palmer's character and the story of his life. That character was anconventional and original; that short life tangle of the dramatic and humorous elements. Palmer was a man of an almost incredible capacity for work; he had an actual genius for the acquisi-His friend says of him that he was a scholar most carnest and resolute, "yet always with the heart of a boy; so great a linguist that he stood alone, yet always modest; full of reliance in himself yet never vainglorious; always at work, yet always world when he had a purpose in view, yet the most de ghtful and the most mirthful of companions."

book-worm, nor was he precocious. He was of the middle-class, the son of a Cambridge schoolmaster who died so early that he contributed little levable, petted, and somewhat fragile boy at resis ed Palmer's extraordinary personal influence. school, Palmer was more distinguished for his cleverness with his fingers in constantly making and devising things and for his gymnastic feats than for intellectual prowess; the only way in which in then betrayed the promise of the future years was in his independent acquisition of Romany. He frequented the gipsy tents, he paid sixpence a lesson to travelling tinkers, and deprived himself of his pocket mency in buying from darkeyed gipsy girls a few more words to add to his vocabulary. He made for himself a gipsy dictionary, and became posses ed of a taste which he never lost for wandering with these lawless and Leland, "he ever heard a strange word or saw a strange face or heard a strange thing 'that he did not remember it." The distinguished Professor became a beloved companion of these wild vagrants. He would sit at the doors of their tents and would talk, though he was a "gorgio," like a Romany of the purest blood; "in fact, they believed that he belonged to them, but that for some unknown reason he chose to go about among the swells and dressed like them." They never concealed from him their many misdemeanors in the way of poaching, cheating etc. Many were the adventures he had among them with his friend Charles Leland." To these good folk, says the latter, " we were always a first-class mystery."

latter, "we were always a first-class mystery."

What with our sp-aking Romany "down to the bottom crust" and Palmer's incredible proficiency at thimble-rig, "ranging the chances," picking pockets, card-sharping, three-monté, and every kind of legerdemain, these honest people never could quite make up their minds whether we were a kind of Brahams, to which they were as Sudras, or what. Woe to the gipsy sharp who tried the cards with the Professor! How often have we gone into a tan where we were all unknown and regarded as a couple of green Gentiles! And with what a wonderful air of innocence would Palmer play the part of a lamb and ask them to give him a specimen of their language; and when they refused, or professed themselves unable to do so, how amiably he would turn to me and remark in deep Romany that we were mistaken, and that the people of the tent were only miserable mumpers of mixed blood who could not ralker! Once I remember, he said this to a gip-y, who retailated in a great rage, "How the devil could I know that you were a gipsy, if you come here dressed up like a gorgio and looking like a gentlemant?"

When the boy Palmer left school, he went di-When the boy Palmer left school, he went di-

rectly into mercantile life in London, and there, untike most city clerks speut every spare moment in learning French and Italian. The old-fashioned methods of learning be threw aside as useless encumbrances, and found his masters among Continental refugees, organ-grinders, sailors at the docks, and sellers of plaster-east images. Before he was eighteen he had made himself a perfect master of well as that of the schools. There was no patois of Italy or France which he could not speak. He thus discovered for hymself as a youth the method of learning languages which was to cerve him so effectually in the years that followed.

"Either you want to learn a language," he would say, "or you do not. If you do not, follow the way of the English schools, and you will succeed. If, however, you do ______ and here he would go on to explain how it should first be studied without the grammar, and with the intention of acquiring, to begin with, the most important part of the actual vocabulary; how ianguages, being in groups, present vocabularies which, with certain variations, are common property; how inflections, suffixes, and so forth, also resemble each other, and therefore come quite easily to the man who has begin with the words, so that in learning simply how to read a tongue, without opening anything more than a dictionary, you acquire insensibly a vast amount of grammar and a great quantity of syntax. The true reason, he always insisted, of the brilliant failure to teach modern languages which distinguishes our schools is that we only approach them by the aid of grammars modelled after the Latin and Greek manner, and that we mistake the teaching of inflection and syntax for that of language. Any intelligent person, Palmer maintained, can learn to read a language in a few weeks, and to speak it in a few months, unless it be his first attempt at an Oriental language. the grammar, and with the intention of acquiring

At twenty and in the enforced idleness of convalescence after severe illness in Cambridge, Palmer began the study of Arabic. The incentive was his acquaintance with Syed Abdullah, a learned teacher of Indian languages who came to the university town to read with a class of men who were going out in the Indian Civil Service. The conversation and the writings of this able Oriental stirred Palmer's imagination; he began to learn the Arabic character; the taste became a passion, and Syed Abdullah found that he had a pupil " not only apt, but with an extraordinary natural genius fer Eastern lanugages." Palmer never resumed his clerkship; there is always a demand in England for the literary and pedagogical services of Orientalists, and he pursued his studies-entering at last the University-with a fervor which quickly brought him helpers and employers. At twenty-six he was said to be of all Europeans the one most thoroughly versed in Eastern languages. He became a notable translator, professor, and explorer of the sacred regions of the East-a scholar and poet with a strange dash of the boy and the actor. "He stood," writes Mr. Stanley Laze Poole, "in strongly marked contrast to the other scholars of his time. Most of them " were brought up upon grammars and dictionaries; he learned Arabic by the ear and mouth. Others were careful about their conjugations and syntax; Palmer dashed to the root of all grammatical rules, and spoke and wrote so and so because it would not be spoken or written any other way. To him strange idioms that a book student could not understand were perfectly clear; he had used them himself in the desert again and again. He was a linguist rather than a philologist, and

he had the merits and faults of a linguist." Many interesting stories are told concerning Palmer's experiences with strange tongues. Once there was a burglary in Cambridge, the burglars escaping and leaving no clew to their detection save a tiny piece of paper oddly marked. Palmer was supposed to know every language under the sun, and the police brought him the scrap. He haprened to be acquainted with the character; it was "Yidhish," the language of the German and Polish Jews, a curious mixture of Hebrew and of German. The note announced that "there was another crib about to be cracked"; Palmer read it to the police, and the burglars were actually caught at work. One day there came to the Professor an ill-speit note from Manchester. "Dear Sir," it said, "can you read the enclosed? Yours truly,—"

The enclosed was a short document in Persian.

presenting no difficulty. Palmer replied that it was a warrant or ticket for certain goods, setting forth, in the name of Allah, that the base with which it came contained so many yards of stuff, of such a quality, made by such a manufacturer, and so forth, a paper of the most prosaic kind. A day or two after he seut off his translation another letter that the chool.

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The MORSE'S SCHOOL FOR BOYS,

He-opens September 20.

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came from the same correspondent. It enclosed a ten-nound acte, with the words:—
"Dear Sir, Hooray for old Cambridge! This was what the Oxford chap sai it was. Yours truly.—"

what the Oxford chap sail it was found truly.——"

The "Oxford chap" was a little wide of the mark.

"Thesvery curious and most interesting document," he said, "hepears tobe a copy of an ancient Persian inscription, probably taken from a tomb or a triumphal column. It is, however, very incomplete. It reads as follows: 'In the name of God. This — was made [or erected] by [name uncertain] in the year [uncertain]. It is one thousand four hundred and seventy-five . . long, and seven hundred and thirty . . broad; and it——'. Here the manuscript abruptly ends." The name of the Oxford scholar was not given.

As a traveler in the East, Palmer had a re-

As a travelier in the East, Palmer had a rewas full of labor and achievement, with a curious markable influence over the tribes whose lauguage he spoke, and whose dress he were. Not always, however was he safe among them. Once during his first visit to the East he was led away by a treacherous guide and betrayed into tion of languages, yet never failed to supplement away by a treacherous guide and betrayed into the power of a gang of Arab robbers, who intended his marvellous instinctive appreciation of their the power of a gang of Arab robbers, who intended meetles by the painful industry which one expects to rob and kill him. The day before the betrayat, to tind only in a student of the plodding type. when it was too late to retreat, he received an intimation from one who had quarrelled with the others as to what was to take place. Very soon his captors -for such they effectively were-began to treat him rudely. He affected to take no notice of this. Then with time for leisure; the most serious man in the takable. As if it had occurred to him for the first time, he sprang up in a rage and cursed them all.
'This to me!' he roared; and drawing from his This translator of the New Testament, this Cam-bridge Professor of Arabic, this interpreter of as he flourished it, 'Down on your knees, you dogs, pocket a letter from an Euglish lady, he exclaimed strange and intricate tongues, was not as a child a and kiss the handwriting of the Sultan!' And down went the whole three hundred of them on their faces, utterly subdued. Truly, I think that the Arabs who slew him at last must have been themselves to the training of the future Orientalist. While a remarkable, for no ordinary Oriental could have

ernment became concerned for the safety of the Suez Canal, it selected Palmer as an ambassador to the Desert sheikhs who might be persuaded to disown Arabi and to insure the Canal from destruction. "Alone and single-handed," says his b ographer, "he induced the tribes to trust his pron to rise at his bidding; to guard the Canal; to line it with guards if necessary; and if called upon to fight Arabi's Nile Bedawin with fifty thousand men." Palmer's death at the hands of the Arabs ended with a tragedy his successful missio remains a mystery; no one knows whether the picturesque people. The unusual had aiways a murder was caused by chance and the blind rage charm for him. "I do not think," says Charles of desert robbers disappointed of their gold, or by order of somebody in power. The sands drank the blood of as brilliant a scholar as England cwned, and way it was shed may never be known.

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